

Reference Number: 416-01-DD

Title of Document: Tuition Assistance Program

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Applicability: All DDSN Permanent State Employees

**The language in this policy does not create an employee contract between the employee and the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDDSN). SCDDSN reserves the right to revise the content of this policy, in part or in whole.**

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### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this directive is to provide a uniform policy for SCDDSN employees interested in participating in a tuition assistance program, from a general curriculum through graduate courses, in order to recruit and retain qualified nursing personnel, occupational therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapy assistants and physical therapy assistants.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

1. Each facility will determine whether to participate and the extent of its participation in providing tuition assistance for employees who are seeking credentials, certification or degrees. Determination will be based on available funding, the need for personnel and qualified employees who request tuition assistance.
2. To qualify, employees must have permanent employment status, have worked for the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs for at least one year with satisfactory service, and be currently working a minimum of thirty (30) hours per week. Temporary employees and employees on leave-without-pay status are not eligible to participate in this program.
3. Courses must be completed outside of working hours, and time spent taking courses will be without pay. Tuition assistance may be provided for no more than six (6) credit hours per academic term per employee.
4. Continuing education programs must be certified by appropriate governing or credentialing bodies.

### **SERVICE COMMITMENT**

1. Employees who request tuition assistance must agree to remain employed with DDSN one month for each month they take courses. The service commitment begins the first day the employee reports to work after the successful completion of course(s).
2. Employees must work at least thirty (30) hours per week to fulfill a service commitment.

3. If an employee fails to fulfill a service commitment agreement, (s) he shall repay the tuition reimbursement plus interest at the prevailing rate.

### **APPLICATION**

1. The employee must submit a letter to the Facility Administrator through the Program Director (P.D.) requesting to participate in the tuition assistance program at least thirty (30) days prior to the start of the course. The letter must state the employee's educational plan, the degree objective, a list of specific courses to be taken, and the anticipated date of completion of the program. The plan must be submitted through the employee's supervisor and have the supervisor's approval.
2. The employee may request reimbursement for tuition and associated lab fees. The cost of books and supplies will be borne by the employee.
3. The notification of approval will be the responsibility of the P.D. It shall be written and shall advise the employee of the service commitment and repayment requirement in the event the service commitment is not fulfilled. The employee shall be required to sign the notification and indicate understanding of the terms and requirements of the program.
4. Application for tuition reimbursement for subsequent courses included in the plan must be submitted to the P.D. at least thirty (30) days prior to the start date for each course. Notification of approval will be the responsibility of the P.D.

### **REIMBURSEMENT**

1. Upon successful completion of the course(s), the employee must provide a copy of the official grade and a receipt for payment of the course fees (excluding books) to the P.D. who will be responsible for preparation of required purchasing documents. Successful completion is defined as a "B" in graduate level courses, a "C" in undergraduate level courses, or a certificate of satisfactory completion in non-graded courses.
2. Employee will acknowledge receipt of reimbursement and the dates of the resultant service commitment in writing.
3. Records of (a) plans of study, (b) requests for reimbursement, (c) employee retention data, and other related information will be maintained by the P.D. for the purpose of determining the success of the program.

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(Originator)

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Stan Butkus, Ph.D.  
State Director  
(Approved)